



C0882-OTH-00705

I-405 Sepulveda Pass Improvements Project

March 3, 2011

Mulholland Design Review Board
Attn: Los Angeles Department of City Planning
6262 Van Nuys Boulevard, Suite 351
Van Nuys, California 91410

References: C0882 I-405 Sepulveda Pass Improvements Project

Subject: Mulholland Bridge Realignment Design

Dear Board Member of the Mulholland Design Review Board (MDRB):

The project team of the I-405 Sepulveda Pass Improvements Project appreciates having the opportunity to present its design for the realignment of the Mulholland Bridge at the public hearing Thursday February 17, 2011. It has been the project's goal to allow for the opportunity of a wide range of community stakeholders to offer suggestions for the I-405 project. The time spent reviewing Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (LACMTA) design and providing feedback is much appreciated.

Unfortunately, LACMTA will not proceed with the application process through the Mulholland Design Review Board. While LACMTA understands and appreciates the recommendations and actions of the MDRB, the project no longer pursues the design that realigns the Mulholland Bridge. Due to anticipated delays that would be required for the approval of the realignment design and through the City of Los Angeles' process, LACMTA will now return to the original baseline design of the demolition and reconstruction of the Mulholland Bridge, which entails building the bridge in place and demolishing and reconstructing the bridge one side at a time.

LACMTA understands the charge of the MDRB and its purpose of maintaining the integrity of the Mulholland scenic corridor and view shed. The recommendations of the MDRB provided at the public hearing entailed the development of a new type selection process for redesigning the aesthetics of the bridge. Doing so would negate the public process that the I-405 Project underwent with the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and would require the creation of a new type selection consisting of a bid and selection process for an artist to design a new bridge. The CAC was unanimous in choosing the original design which resembles the existing bridge. In addition, the bidding, selection, and design process alone would delay this project significantly, by adding to its construction and delaying the project from 12 to 18 months.

In addition, the MDRB recommended that the I-405 Project pursue a design that maintains the continuous roadway of Mulholland Drive or at least the appearance of, rather than having a T-intersection.

As stated in the public hearing, the LACMTA listened and reacted to the concerns of citizens from the surrounding communities with respect to the original baseline design for the demolition and reconstruction of the Mulholland Bridge. Many community members were concerned about the impacts that the approximate two-year duration of construction would have on traffic, public safety, and emergency response. LACMTA responded and studied six design alternatives and determined one of them to be favorable. The preferred design for the realignment of the Mulholland Bridge entailed

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building a new bridge next to the existing bridge, which would have successfully mitigated construction impacts by maintaining the full use of the Mulholland Drive Bridge throughout construction and avoiding utility relocation. This design was identified as the best option and was pursued, after receiving clearance through Caltrans Environmental and Legal that the environmental process would not need to be reopened.

The preferred design for the realignment of the bridge was the most feasible and offered the most benefits. All of the other designs, including those that maintained the continuous roadway of Mulholland Drive, entailed significant right-of-way impacts, aesthetically unacceptable bridge grade elevations, and massive retaining walls. These designs were therefore rejected due to these severe impacts.

It also has become known that the Brentwood Residents Coalition has threatened to file suit against the I-405 Project on the grounds that the proposed new alignment requires an entirely new environmental process. LACMTA is confident that the project stands on firm legal ground and that the environmental clearance is valid. LACMTA strongly believes that we would prevail if this matter were to go to litigation. Unfortunately, the project does not have the luxury of time. Between the uncertainties of the City process and the risk of a lawsuit, LACMTA is concerned the project could be significantly delayed, and the public would have to endure the impacts of construction for a longer time. This is the reason the I-405 Project has made the decision to go back to the baseline design in the Contract.

LACMTA has responded to the concerns of the community in the vicinity of the Mulholland Bridge and the broader public that travels through the Sepulveda Pass by developing a design that reduces the severity of impacts to the community. Also, LACMTA has made a commitment and had hoped to engage in a process that addresses the aesthetic concerns of the MDRB and the community, and pursues ongoing efforts to ensure that the bridge realignment design maintains the aesthetic integrity of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Plan.

In moving forward with the original design for the demolition and reconstruction of the Mulholland Bridge, LACMTA will conduct an aggressive outreach plan to the community in the vicinity of the bridge and the broader public. It has always been the commitment of the I-405 Project to inform the MDRB of the design for the reconstruction of the Mulholland Bridge and to mitigate the resultant impacts with landscape and planting that enhance the area. LACMTA will continue to update the MDRB and the community throughout the long process of the reconstruction of the Mulholland Bridge.

Again, LACMTA thanks you for the time you have devoted to this matter.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Barbour
Executive Officer
Highway Project Management
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority